Byers, Gail Y (LAW)

From: Colberg, Talis J (LAW) [/O=SOA/OU=FIRST ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=TJCOLBERG]
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2008 9:55 AM
To: 'govpalin@alaska.gov'
Subject: FW: NOAA press release attached for Cook Inlet Beluga Count

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From: Nizich, Michael A (GOV)
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2008 9:50 AM
To: Colberg, Talis J (LAW)
Subject: Re: NOAA press release attached for Cook Inlet Beluga Count

Gov's account is govpalin@alaska.gov

From: Colberg, Talis J (LAW)
To: gov.palin@yahoo.com
Cc: Nizich, Michael A (GOV)
Sent: Thu Sep 25 09:39:12 2008
Subject: FW: NOAA press release attached for Cook Inlet Beluga Count
FYI. The beluga count is the same as last year. Talis

← attachment here

From: Meyen, Bradley E (LAW)
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2008 9:31 AM
To: Colberg, Talis J (LAW); Gordon, Nancy R (LAW); Tillery, Craig J (LAW); Barry, Elizabeth J (LAW)
Cc: Daugherty, Steven A (LAW)
Subject: RE: NOAA press release attached for Cook Inlet Beluga Count

Sorry, forgot the attachment.

Brad Meyen
Assistant Attorney General
Natural Resources Section
(907) 269-5232

From: Meyen, Bradley E (LAW)
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2008 9:30 AM
To: Colberg, Talis J (LAW); Gordon, Nancy R (LAW); Tillery, Craig J (LAW); Barry, Elizabeth J (LAW)
Cc: Daugherty, Steven A (LAW)
Subject: NOAA press release attached for Cook Inlet Beluga Count

FYI-copy of the Beluga count press release is attached. The litigation filed by various groups in U.S. District Court over NOAA's 6 month extension to make the decision on listing is effectively on hold now pending release of that listing decision on or before October 20, 2008.

Brad Meyen
Assistant Attorney General
Natural Resources Section
(907) 269-5232

NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: Sheela McLean
907-586-7032

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 25, 2008

NOAA: Cook Inlet Beluga Population Holds Steady from 2007

The Cook Inlet beluga whale population has held steady from last year's count of 375 animals, based on NOAA's Fisheries Service latest annual survey.

NOAA's Fisheries Service scientists conducted aerial surveys in early June during fish migrations, when belugas concentrate near river mouths, including the Susitna and Little Susitna rivers, Knik Arm, and Chickaloon Bay.

NOAA's Fisheries Service scientists flew over upper Cook Inlet on seven days between June 3 and 12, manually counting the belugas while taking photographs and video of the whales.

Scientists later carefully examined the images to provide a more complete estimate of the total number of beluga whales in the inlet.

When scientists reanalyzed the 2008 survey observations, the population estimate remained the same as last year—375.

In 2007, NOAA's Fisheries Service accepted a petition to list the Cook Inlet beluga population as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. A final determination following completion of the population status review is due in October.

NOAA's Fisheries Service declared the Cook Inlet beluga population depleted in 2000 under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The population, however, has not recovered as hoped. Alaska native groups have been allowed to hunt the whales under co-management agreements with NOAA's Fisheries Service, with restrictions on how many whales could be taken in a given year. Between 1999 and 2007, hunters took five beluga whales for subsistence in Cook Inlet, down from 308 between 1995 and 1998. There was no subsistence hunt for beluga whales in 2008.

Cook Inlet belugas are one of five beluga populations recognized within U.S. waters. The others are Bristol Bay, eastern Bering Sea, eastern Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea.

The Cook Inlet beluga population estimates since 1994 are:
1994: 653
1995: 491
1996: 594
1997: 440
1998: 347
1999: 367
2000: 435
2001: 386
2002: 313
2003: 357
2004: 366
2005: 278

2006: 302
2007: 375
2008: 375

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NOAA Fisheries in Alaska: http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov